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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women

Statement submitted by African Women's Development and Communication Network, Amnesty International, Asia Pacific Women's Watch, Association for Women's Rights in Development, Center for Women's Global Leadership, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era, International Planned Parenthood Federation, Network Women In Development and Europe, Women's Environment and Development Organization, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

The global campaign for Gender Equality Architecture Reform welcomes consideration of "financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women" as the priority theme for the 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

We welcome also statements by the Secretary-General and member states in support of strengthening the UN's gender equality architecture.

The campaign for Gender Equality Architecture Reform, now comprising 82 organizations in over 35 countries, believes that the creation of a stronger UN entity for women will greatly advance gender equality, the empowerment of women and their human rights throughout the world.

For the past three decades, the UN has been a galvanizing force in efforts to define a comprehensive global agenda for peace and security, human rights, gender equality, women's empowerment, poverty eradication and sustainable development. As a result, there have been significant advances for women, including through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Summit, and various UN agencies have done important work on specific aspects of gender equality.

The UN, however, still lacks an effective mechanism to deliver on many of the essential commitments made. It has several small under-resourced agencies focused exclusively on women's issues, and other larger agencies make critical contributions to women's human rights and gender equality, but it is usually a small part of their mandate, and often receives low priority.

As the Secretary-General has already stated on 25 November 2007, a stronger United Nations entity for women should be able to "call on all of the United Nations system's resources in the work to empower women and realize gender equality worldwide" and "mobilize forces of change at the global level, and inspire enhanced results at the country level."

The campaign for Gender Equality Architecture Reform therefore calls on member states of the UN, with the support of the women's movement, to act now to create a stronger United Nations entity for women.

- An Under-Secretary-General should head this entity for women, to ensure the necessary status required for representation and decision-making at the highest levels both in policy-development and program operations at the global and country levels. The new Under-Secretary-General post would provide higher level leadership than at present to more effectively drive the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda.

- Extensive field presences and a strong policy and programmatic mandate is essential for a strengthened UN entity for women to effectively improve the lives of women on the ground.

- Substantial and predictable resources to ensure that the new entity for women has the capacity to meet expectations and deliver results at all levels. It must be funded initially at a minimum level of $500 million to $1 billion USD with increases over time.

- Accountability within the new entity for women, at both national and international levels, including through meaningful involvement of civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations for women.

- The new entity should also promote gender mainstreaming by the integration of gender equality and women's human rights throughout the UN and especially in the UN Country Pilot projects and in all UN reform processes.

Strengthening the UN's gender equality machinery is a crucial part of financing for development. It will better enable the UN and governments to deliver on promises made to advance gender equality and women's human rights at the global and country levels.